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Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3808th Meeting

Wednesday, 6 August 1997, 10.55 a.m.

New York

President:	Sir John Weston	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	Egypt	Mr. Awaad
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Da Rosa
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Wlosowicz
	Portugal	Mr. Soares
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Identical letters dated 18 July 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/561)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Expression of welcome to Mr. Hans Dahlgren, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

The President: I should like at the outset of the meeting to extend, on behalf of the Council, a warm welcome to the new Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Hans Dahlgren. We look forward to cooperating with him in the Council's work.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of August, I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Peter Osvald, former Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of July. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Osvald for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Identical letters dated 18 July 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/561)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic, in which she requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mrs. Kpongo (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on the agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them identical letters dated 18 July 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council, document S/1997/561.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/613, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Central African Republic, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau and Kenya.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1997/543, which contains the text of a letter dated 7 July 1997 from the President of Gabon addressed to the Secretary-General.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Mahugu (Kenya): The Central African Republic has been in a situation of armed conflict since the beginning of 1996. This conflict, which began as a military uprising, has had other dimensions of the character of a civil rebellion with intermittent military uprisings. During its duration it has plunged the country into acute political crisis and unprecedented economic catastrophe. It has affected every aspect of civil life in that country and could destabilize the whole region. This situation poses a threat to international peace and security and requires the urgent attention of the Security Council.

It is this threat to regional stability that attracted the attention of the Ouagadougou summit in December 1996, at which the Head of State of the Central African Republic requested international intervention. As a result,

a regional initiative with the participation of Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal and Togo was initiated. Today, thanks to the efforts of those countries, an, international force, the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) is already in the Central African Republic with the objective of restoring peace to that country.

It is this regional initiative, which has already been marked by a measure of success, that the present draft resolution must be seen to support, because, after all is said and done, the Security Council has the universal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council has a responsibility to support regional initiatives. The draft resolution before us would give MISAB the Security Council's approval for the continued conduct of its mission.

We believe that for progress in the resolution of any conflict the parties to that conflict must show a willingness to settle the dispute through peaceful means. We are convinced that the parties in the Central African Republic showed this commitment by signing, on 25 January 1997 a series of documents that are now referred to in the draft resolution before us as the Bangui Agreements. The documents are considered by all parties as a *modus vivendi* by which they can achieve peace and reconciliation. In this regard, we wish to commend the efforts of President El Hadj Omar Bongo of Gabon.

MISAB is trying to observe the implementation of these commitments by the parties — commitments they have freely entered into. We believe that MISAB is doing a good job and deserves the support of the Security Council. It is for that reason that we support the present draft resolution and will vote in favour of it. In doing so, we acknowledge the significant contribution that African countries and the Government of France are making in resolving the crisis, and we appeal to the international community to continue to support the initiative. It should be borne in mind that there is an interlinkage between peace and development. We believe that any meaningful international involvement in the Central African Republic should take account of this and should address the situation appropriately.

Mr. Da Rosa (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): Since April 1996 the Central African Republic has faced a dangerous political crisis caused by army rebellions. The Government has been unable to bring about respect for public order; the lack of security is worsening and threatens to spread throughout the country. These serious tensions are likely to affect regional stability and thus pose a threat to international peace and security.

Hence, at the Nineteenth Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government of France and Africa, held at Ouagadougou, those leaders, aware of the seriousness of the issue and the urgent need to take action to halt the spiral of violence, appointed four of their number to an International Monitoring Committee to supervise the implementation of the Bangui Agreements, chaired by General Amadou Toumani Touré, former Head of State of Mali. Its task will be to negotiate a truce between the loyalists and the rebels.

At the request of the mediator and following agreement at the Committee on Consensus-building and Dialogue, held at Bangui from 11 to 16 January 1997, those four Heads of State decided to dispatch the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), with the logistical support of France. We take this opportunity to reiterate our sincere thanks to the French Government for its gesture, and to the other countries that responded so promptly to President Patasse's request.

Thanks to the Committee's mediation efforts, calm has returned to the capital, and on 25 January 1997 the Bangui Agreements were signed under the sponsorship of President El Hadj Omar Bongo.

We believe that the Security Council should lend full support to these praiseworthy efforts. The mediation efforts of the four Heads of State clearly demonstrate a regional determination to resolve conflicts in Africa through dialogue and joint action.

Guinea-Bissau therefore believes that the Council should give full attention to the 4 July 1997 request addressed to the Secretary-General by His Excellency Mr. Ange-Félix Patasse, President of the Central African Republic, and to that by President El Hadj Omar Bongo, in which they express their grave concern over the situation in that country and request the Security Council to authorize the States members of MISAB to continue their operations to achieve the objectives of their mandate. At stake is not only the security of a single country, but regional stability and even the maintenance of international peace and security.

We believe that the wish of the Government and of the International Monitoring Committee to place the activities of MISAB within an appropriate legal and

political framework falls within the purview of the Security Council. Thus, the Council, by acting promptly and suitably, would send a most positive political signal to the parties that they should comply fully with all initiatives relating to dialogue and national reconciliation.

We wish in conclusion to praise the people of the Central African Republic for the courage, wisdom and patriotism they have displayed throughout the crisis. For our part, we are committed to continuing to support efforts at rebuilding and at consolidating peace in the Central African Republic.

It is in that spirit that we will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us, in the hope that MISAB will fully achieve the objectives set out in its mandate.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): Japan has always worked for peace and stability in Africa, as peace and stability are the prerequisites for promoting development and prosperity. Japan therefore welcomes the regional initiative that is being taken on the situation in the Central African Republic. The Government of Japan wishes to express its full support for the efforts being made by the members of the International Monitoring Committee, namely, Gabon, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad, and to express its appreciation to these countries, as well as to Senegal and Togo, for contributing troops to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB).

The Council has been working with great care on the draft resolution before us, with a view to responding as best it can to the request made by the countries of the region. It has now produced a draft resolution which my delegation believes is clear and to the point, approving the continued conduct of the operation in a neutral and impartial way by the Member States participating in MISAB, so that the objective of the mission can be attained. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council, through this resolution, also authorizes the Member States participating in MISAB and those States providing logistical support to ensure the security and freedom of movement of their personnel.

With the adoption of this draft resolution my delegation believes that an effective action can be taken to restore peace to the Central African Republic, thereby contributing to the stability of the entire region. My delegation accordingly will vote in favour of this draft resolution.

In closing, I would like to state that my Government believes that the initiative being taken by the countries of the region sets a good precedent for the prevention of conflicts in Africa. It is therefore pleased that this draft resolution has been made ready for the consideration of the Council in a timely manner. We hope that peace will take root in the Central African Republic in the very near future, so that it will lead to its long-term stability and development.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): We are gravely concerned about the continuing crisis in the Central African Republic and its implications for the whole central African region. We fully share the view of the regional countries that the crisis in the Central African Republic poses serious threats to regional peace and stability.

Given the gravity of the situation, we highly applaud the efforts which have been undertaken for the last several months by regional countries — in particular by Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Mali, Senegal and Togo — and by other countries which support them, to resolve the crisis in the Central African Republic through the deployment of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). We also commend their courageous and resolute decision to undertake a military operation at a time of uncertainty. It is our firm belief that such regional efforts deserve strong support and encouragement by the international community.

We further believe that the Council should extend its full political support and blessing to the on-going regional initiative by approving the continuation of MISAB operations and authorizing MISAB to ensure the security and freedom of movement of their personnel under Chapter VII of the Charter. We will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council.

It is our most sincere hope that MISAB will continue to lay the groundwork for the return of peace and security to the Central African Republic at the earliest possible date. We trust that the Council will continue to scrutinize closely, through periodic reports by the participating countries, the operations of MISAB and their impact on the situation in order to help promote an early resolution to the crisis.

In concluding, we would like to underline the significance of today's decision by the Council. We believe that the Council's endorsement of MISAB will set

an important precedent in establishing appropriate linkages between the Council and regional initiatives in matters of international peace and security. We hope that the success of MISAB will encourage further positive developments in regional peace and security initiatives, in close coordination with the Council.

Mr. Awaad (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Egypt has followed with grave concern the development of events in the Central African Republic since the beginning of the first military mutiny in 10 April 1996. That mutiny and the events that followed it during the months of May and November of 1996 led to a grave political split which had serious economic and social consequences and from which the people of the Central African Republic continue to suffer.

The movement of the group of States of the Ouagadougou summit of Dece.nber 1996 and the establishment of an International Monitoring Committee under the chairmanship of the former President of Mali, General Amadou Touré, to contain the crisis and bring it to a peaceful settlement have had a tangible, positive effect on the political situation in Bangui, as a political dialogue has begun between the two parties to the conflict which has built confidence between them. This effort was concretized in a manner that expressed the serious intent of these States to deal with the crisis in Central Africa. I mean by this their decision last 8 January to deploy an African force in Bangui which would have the responsibility of supervising the surrender of arms of the former mutineers, integrating them into the national army and monitoring the compliance of the parties to their commitments under the Bangui Agreements, one of which is to cease acts of violence.

It is a source of satisfaction for us that the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) has achieved tangible success in the discharge of its mandate. I cannot fail to express here Egypt's deep appreciation for the important role played by His Excellency President Omar Bongo of Gabon, as well as for the technical support rendered by France for the success of these efforts.

The regional intervention in the Central African Republic proves once again that Africa does not lack the machinery necessary to contain the crises which take place in its States, both on the sub-regional and continental levels. It also constitutes, in our opinion, a successful example of preventive action that deserves all international support and encouragement. In this regard Egypt did not hesitate to respond to the request of General Amadou Touré to sponsor the draft resolution before the Council. Naturally, we will vote for it.

Egypt remains fully convinced that an appropriate measure of economic and human development is the sole guarantee for the non-repetition of the crisis in Central Africa. In this regard I would like to express our support for the constructive role played by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the development, social and political fields. We believe that the continuation of this support will encourage the Government of President Patasse to continue to pursue the courageous political orientation it has chosen. It is our hope that the Bretton Woods institutions, in cooperation with UNDP, will prepare a comprehensive plan for economic reform that will enable the Government of the Central African Republic to initiate real genuine development for its people.

It was a source of satisfaction for us that the Security Council consultations led to a positive response to the requests of President Omar Bongo contained in his letter to the Secretary-General dated 14 July 1997: first, to approve the mandate of MISAB; and second, to give it the authority necessary for its role in Bangui. It is our hope that the draft resolution that we are about to adopt today will be a political message that will encourage the parties concerned in Central Africa to achieve national reconciliation and to settle their differences through negotiation.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In recent months, we have witnessed the development of what we believe to be a new and important doctrinal approach on the part of the Council with respect to the concept of threats to international peace and security and also to questions relating to peacekeeping operations. Along these lines, we would like to highlight the case of the multinational force for Albania that was authorized by the Council in March of this year. That multinational force was authorized outside of the traditional framework of United Nations operations, but it was clearly in conformity with the principles and objectives of the Charter as regards peacekeeping. We also should recall that the Council approved the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti, replacing the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti, in July 1997.

The draft resolution before us today is part of this new approach. In the past, the Council might have interpreted the case of the Central African Republic as

being a matter of internal jurisdiction, and therefore would not have been seized of it.

Nonetheless, the situation of the Central African Republic is a vivid example of an internal problem with international implications. Everyone here is aware of the complex circumstances in the southern African region and of the precarious situation, which could deteriorate even further if the crisis in that country were to intensify.

The case of the Central African Republic is also an example of the new resolve and commitment on the part of African countries collectively to tackle and resolve their own issues.

The work of the countries participating in the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) is clear evidence of joint, responsible and united action by the African countries. It brings to mind other recent cases that have come to the attention of the Council and that have become links in a chain of peace operations promoted, financed and directed by the Africans themselves within the framework of the mechanisms for political agreement that already exist on that continent.

Costa Rica believes that this constructive and responsible attitude deserves international support and, of course, the support of the United Nations, because we are convinced that the best solutions always come from the interested parties themselves, particularly if they are geared towards the establishment of democracy and respect for human rights throughout Africa. Along these lines, we wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the attitude of the countries outside the region that have links and interests in Africa and that are providing indispensable logistical support for the success of these peacekeeping operations.

During the conflict in the former Zaire — today the Democratic Republic of the Congo — Costa Rica expressed on various occasions its opinion that a solution to the problems of southern Africa should necessarily include economic, social and humanitarian components. Poverty and injustice are at the root of the political and the security conflicts of that region and of the developing world in general.

In the view of my delegation, it is necessary to stress this aspect on every relevant occasion. International intervention to maintain the peace in those countries will not amount to much unless it is accompanied by clear and resolute actions to promote economic progress, justice and equality within the framework of respect for the rule of law and the enforcement of human rights. In this connection, we believe that this is a timely occasion to recall the Secretary-General's proposal to hold an international conference for the reconstruction and development of southern Africa. This wise proposal remains fully valid, and we take this opportunity to encourage the Secretary-General to deploy the necessary efforts for its prompt implementation.

I should like to conclude this statement by expressing the strong support of Costa Rica for the adoption of the draft resolution before us. We are convinced and trust that today's approval of MISAB will be developed in keeping with the relevant internationally recognized principles, and in particular with respect to the observance of human rights.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): France will support the draft resolution before us. We would like to pay tribute to the efforts made by several African countries to help the Government of the Central African Republic peacefully to resolve a crisis situation. We would like to thank the African sponsors of this draft resolution, and my delegation would also like to thank, if you will allow me, Sir, the successive Presidents of the Security Council — the Swedish President and yourself — who saw to it that this draft resolution could promptly be put to the vote, as desired by those African countries that are members of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB).

France, as is widely known, supports politically and in humanitarian and material terms the regional endeavour conducted by the member countries of MISAB. France is in favour of regional efforts for the settlement of conflicts, but it also encourages any initiative that, in strict conformity with the Charter, aims at affirming the important role of the Security Council, especially under Chapter VII. That is why my country has from the outset supported the action taken by the President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Ange-Félix Patasse, and that taken by the President of Gabon, Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo, in an attempt to obtain approval for the mandate of MISAB and authorization from the Council under Chapter VII so as to ensure security and freedom of movement for the staff of MISAB and for those supporting them.

We believe that this initiative is in keeping with a constructive evolution with regard to the United Nations, as reflected in three principles: scrupulous respect for the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations; the affirmation of the role of the Security Council; and support for the Security Council's backing of regional efforts.

The vote we are about to take will bear witness to this concern that we all must have that our actions be transparent and that there be strict respect for the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of France for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the preceding presidency and to me.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As we have stated on various occasions, Chile gives priority to regional action in order to deal with regional issues. In the case of Africa, together with reiterating that it is essential to know the position of the Organization of African Unity on a given conflict, we have supported the processes and agreements entered into by the countries of the various subregions to tackle any crises that may arise on the territory of a State in that same subregion.

We believe that this means of action has functioned appropriately and that it should be supported by the international community.

The Bangui Agreements address the state of affairs, and therefore we welcome them. The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) also addresses the situation and fulfills a vital function in the implementation of the agreements. For these reasons, we commend President Bongo of Gabon for his political leadership of MISAB and the Governments of Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Chad and Togo for their participation in that Mission. We also want to recognize the logistical support that France is providing to this inter-African operation.

The President of the Central African Republic has addressed the Security Council, stating that he wants MISAB's activities to take place in an appropriate political and legal framework. He has requested the Council's authorization so that the Member States can conduct the necessary operations to obtain MISAB's objectives and so that they will be authorized under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to ensure the security and freedom of movement of the personnel of the Mission and of the States that are providing logistical support. President Bongo of Gabon has addressed the Security Council along the same lines.

In addition to affirming that Chile supports the request of Presidents Patasse and Bongo, our delegation will be voting in favour of the draft resolution. We believe that it is necessary to provide the aforementioned appropriate legal and political framework to the operation in the Central African Republic. In addition, my delegation considers it a very important principle that such multinational-force operations be conducted under the umbrella of the United Nations and that there be some form of international monitoring of the operations.

In conclusion, we would like to tell the Government and the people of the Central African Republic that we hope that the crisis confronting the country can be overcome as soon as possible, in accordance with the Bangui Agreements.

Mr. Wlosowicz (Poland): It is not the first time during Poland's term in the Security Council that the Council is looking into active regional involvement in a situation which creates a threat to international peace and security. It has to be noted that the theme of regional initiative is becoming more and more popular. This is a very welcome phenomenon to which we have already here in this room devoted much time and energy.

The Security Council will soon deliberate on the case of a multinational force which has been successfully operating in another part of the world. It is very likely that we will do this with a great deal of relief, satisfaction and growing trust that regional leadership can be effective in maintaining international peace and security in today's complex and demanding world. With this hope, we are looking at the contents of the draft resolution before us today.

There is no doubt that the Central African Republic is experiencing a particularly difficult period in its history. There also seems to be no longer any doubt that this country has not been able to cope with its problems on its own. Fortunately, the region, which well understood the danger for peace and stability in Africa, managed to prevent further worsening of the situation in the Central African Republic. The Bangui Agreements were signed and as a result the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) was established.

Today, taking note of the letter dated 4 July 1997 from President Patasse and of the concern expressed by many members of the international community, the Security Council is about to approve the continued conduct of the operation by Member States participating in MISAB.

We will vote for the draft resolution before us because in our view, despite regional efforts, the situation in the Central African Republic continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security. Therefore, we believe that States of the region should be given adequate support.

We are satisfied that the resolution takes due care of the question of the security and freedom of movement of the members of the operation.

In conclusion, as is always done in cases like today's, it has to be stressed that the future of the Central African Republic is ultimately its people's responsibility. This must not be overlooked while counting on international, including United Nations, involvement in the process of achieving peace in any troubled country.

Mr. Soares (Portugal): Like others before us, Portugal would like to commend the African mediation in the resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic. Moreover, we would like to pay tribute to the decision by the countries of that sub-region to establish an inter-African monitoring mechanism to help restore peace and security in the Central African Republic, and in particular to disarm the former mutineers, the militia and all other unlawfully armed individuals. I would like to stress the importance we attach to support for the democratic process, namely to help prepare the elections to be held in August 1998.

In this context, we fully support and commend the efforts of the International Monitoring Committee, of its Chairman, General Touré, and also of President Bongo of Gabon for their important role in the resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic.

The on-going efforts of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements, even if not completely successful in terms of the process of disarmament, have nevertheless made a significant contribution towards national reconciliation and peace in that country.

As President Ange-Félix Patasse pointed out in his letter to the Security Council of 14 July, the situation in his country continues to be volatile and could affect regional stability and threaten peace in the region. In fact, the proliferation of a large supply of weapons in the hands of former mutineers and of the civilian population is of great concern. Therefore, the continuous support of the international community is not only vital for political stability and peace in that country but also important in the entire subregion. It was in this context that Portugal decided to give its support to the draft resolution before us today, which responds in a positive way to the request of the President of the Central African Republic, and gives its support to the efforts of the countries of the subregion.

Mr. Richardson (United States): The United States is very pleased to join with other members of the Council in supporting this draft resolution. The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) has accomplished much to restore peace and security to the Central African Republic.

The United States wishes to express its support to the participants in the force — Togo, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Gabon. The dedication of these countries to peace, and their troops on the ground, has been the critical element in restoring stability to the Central African Republic. It is also an important milestone in the development of the indigenous African peacekeeping capability. In this sense the Inter-African Mission will be an important precedent and a test case for further African peacekeeping efforts. We will be following its progress closely.

We are pleased that the Security Council today can reinforce the authority of the mandate of the Inter-African Mission: to monitor the implementation of the Bangui Agreements and to take other actions regarding disarmament of ex-rebels, the militias and individuals. Our vote today in favour of this resolution provides formal acknowledgement of the vital role that the force has played.

We must express, however, our concern at the continued instability in the Central African Republic. Hostilities have abated since the signing of the Bangui Agreements and the creation of the Inter-African Mission on 25 January. But the job is not over and all elements have not renounced violence or turned in their weapons.

We also wish to take special note of the financial and other contributions of France, Kenya and other donors which have made the Inter-African Mission possible. Today's resolution states that the expenses and logistical support for the force will continue to be borne

in the future on a voluntary basis. It is our understanding that this Mission will not become a United Nations-assessed operation.

We welcome the provision of this resolution that calls for bi-weekly reporting from the Inter-African Mission on the situation in the Central African Republic. This will provide the Council with a regular update and ensure effective Council oversight of the operation it is approving today. We also believe that the Secretary-General should take steps to increase the United Nations knowledge of developments in the Central African Republic, so that he can provide his own views to the Council.

Once again I wish to express the appreciation of my Government for the efforts of the Inter-African Mission to restore peace to the troubled Central African Republic and strengthen its democratically elected Government.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom recognizes the gravity of the situation in the Central African Republic and is concerned at the difficulties that the authorities there have experienced in maintaining public order following the recent series of army mutinies. While we are encouraged that a ceasefire has held since June, we are conscious of the continuing insecurity and tension in Bangui and of the risk that this instability may spread throughout the country and region.

The United Kingdom believes that the priority must be to ensure that peace and stability are effectively restored, and in that regard we commend the efforts of the African and other States involved in the continued search for a peaceful settlement in the Central African Republic. We welcome in particular the contribution of those countries that have provided troops to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), and the continuing French commitment to support the operation. We pay tribute to both the African and French soldiers who have lost their lives attempting to bring about peace and stability.

We applaud the role of regional leaders and others in the current mediation efforts, and in particular the work of General Touré as Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee on the implementation of the Bangui Agreements. We believe that the United Nations Development Programme's support for the wider peace-building process is an important factor in the success of these efforts. The initiatives taken on the Central African Republic to date clearly demonstrate the importance and effectiveness of African leadership in dealing with conflict and instability in the region, and the United Kingdom wishes to reaffirm its support for such initiatives.

We note the success so far of MISAB's efforts in reducing the number of arms and heavy weaponry in the Central African Republic. This is a crucial task. But we remain concerned at the large amount of weapons still in circulation and the continuing danger this presents. In this regard, we believe it is essential that the scope of MISAB's operations is clearly defined. This draft resolution helps to do this. We are grateful, too, for the information received so far, including in General Touré's report, on MISAB's activities to date and its future objectives. We believe it is essential for the Security Council to have a clear sense of MISAB's tasks so that it can effectively monitor their implementation. We therefore look forward to receiving further reports, as provided for in this resolution, on MISAB's progress and the longer-term prospects for the political process in the country.

I resume my function as President of the Council.

I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1997/613.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1125 (1997).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.